

Agenda Item 6
Report SSC/05/10

Committee Safer and Stronger Communities P&SC

Date 12 February 2010

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FUND

Report by Graham Redgwell, Governance Officer

On a number of occasions, the Committee has considered the implementation of the Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) operated by the County Council. As a result, several recommendations were made to the Cabinet Member and to Mr John Symonds, the officer in charge of the Fund.

Set out below is a list of the recommendations and the outcomes. Given the evidence presented, the Committee is invited to confirm that this issue has been dealt with to its satisfaction and can now be concluded.

<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN 2009	
That the Committee should receive an update in the first half of 2009, indicating the nature of any changes made to the CIF scheme; the outcome of the bidding rounds in 2008/09; and presentations from two beneficiaries of the CIF funding (one small and one large)	An update report was presented to the Committee on 9 February 2009 (SSC/01/09). Jackie Sully (Rainbow Services in Harlow) and Ann Cousins (Great Baddow Parish Council) attended the meeting to report in detail on their experience of the CIF
That proposals for a further three/four years of funding for the CIF should be included in the budget proposals to be considered by the Council in February 2009	Four year funding of the CIF from 2009/10 to 2012/13 inclusive was agreed by Council in February 2009 as part of the capital programme
That Members should be kept well informed of bidding for the CIF, including being made aware of closing dates; being notified of any applications as and when they are made; and being notified of the outcomes of any bids made	Members are informed individually by e-mail of all applications received for their districts and of the outcomes of the judging process

ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE LONGER TERM	
That no changes should be made to the 12 way split of funding for the CIF and that the opportunity to carry over any underspends in any district council area to a later round of bidding should be maintained	This was agreed by the Cabinet Member
That the continued use of local Judging Panels to determine applications for the CIF should be supported	This was agreed by the Cabinet Member
That the Council should continue to pursue an active press and marketing campaign, with an emphasis on project completion and success, and that this campaign emphasise that follow up bids can be made and provide information on how applications can put forward over more than one round of bidding	This has been achieved with an active campaign of press releases and coverage of project completions and launch events. The Council's Communications Unit is involved fully in all aspects of publicity and marketing
That the Cabinet Member should ensure that unparished areas are not disadvantaged in the bidding process for the CIF	This is addressed during the work undertaken by both the Area Co-ordination Team and the Communications Unit
That consideration should be given to how the CIF might be refocused, possibly by funding fewer but larger projects, compared with remaining with the status quo	The Peoples £100,000 Community Chest has been introduced in 2009/10. This makes £100,000 available for a local community project in each district over the four years of the Council (three districts per year). In the current year the funding is available in Castle Point, Harlow and Tendring
That consideration should be given to extending assistance from the CIF to include revenue support in clearly defined circumstances	The Cabinet Member decided that the CIF should remain as a capital grant scheme and no revenue is therefore available through it. The Area Co-ordinators and CIF Co-ordinator are, however, able to offer advice to applicants on potential sources of

	alternative funding
That, in line with County Council financial regulations, a robust post completion auditing scheme be maintained	A full internal audit review of the CIF was carried out in 2008/09, which concluded that both the control design and operational management of the scheme were 'best practice'. The overall audit opinion was 'substantial assurance'. Two recommendations were made regarding improving management information systems and recording of payments and both have been implemented fully
